

SR 167 Corridor Plan and HOT Lanes Pilot Project

Corridor Working Group Meeting – Meeting Summary

October 18, 2005

1:30 – 3:00 p.m.

WSDOT Kent Maintenance Center
26620 68th Avenue South, Kent 98032

Attendees

WSDOT

Carol Hunter
Mike Sallis
Mark Bandy
Ron Landon
Barbara Ivanov
Thomas Noyes
Chad Brown
Stephanie Weber

City of Renton

Nick Afzali

King County

Ann Martin

City of Kent

Cathy Mooney
Chad Bieren
Steve Mullen
Tim LaPorte

Pierce County

Cindy Larkin

City of Sumner

Bill Shoemaker

City of Auburn

Dennis Dowdy
Roger Thordarson

Port of Tacoma

Dick Dorsett
Brian Mannelly

Muckleshoot Tribe

Karen Walters

Carter Burgess

Jared Moore

Perteet

Loren Sand

EnviroIssues

Kristine dos Remedios

Welcome and Introductions

Carol Hunter, WSDOT

Carol Hunter, WSDOT, welcomed the group and thanked them for coming. All attendees introduced themselves and the agency they represent. Carol reviewed the agenda and started the meeting. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the recent team tour of the Minneapolis, Minnesota HOT Lanes, the HOT Lane project schedule, and public involvement activities. Nick Afzali presented the most recent information on the SW 41st Street and I-405 Interchange Design Concept. Feedback received at the open houses that were held on October 4th and October 13th was discussed. Loren Sand from Perteet provided the group with an update on the SR 167 Corridor Plan modeling efforts.

Approve July 19th Meeting Summary

Carol Hunter, WSDOT

An electronic copy of the July 19th Meeting Summary will be emailed to the group. Any comments or questions on the meeting summary should be sent to Kristine dos Remedios at EnviroIssues, kdosremedios@enviroissues.com, and Carol Hunter at WSDOT, hunterc@wsdot.wa.gov, by Friday, October 21, 2005.

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Minneapolis HOT Lane Tour Report

Carol Hunter, WSDOT and Jared Moore, Carter Burgess

Carol Hunter and Mark Bandy from WSDOT, and Greg Henk and Jared Moore from Carter Burgess traveled to Minneapolis, Minnesota at the end of September to tour the HOT Lanes project on I-394, officially called the I-395 MnPASS Express Lanes (www.mnpass.org). The I-395 MnPASS project started operation in Spring 2005. The group toured the highway facility and team offices. WSDOT is considering a similar design with a combination of double white lines and skip striping, without pile-ons, to delineate and buffer the HOT lanes from the general-purpose lanes. Carol passed around a notebook that contained photos of the MnPASS facility, as well as a few pictures from the HOT Lanes projects along Route 91 in Orange County, California and along I-10 and US 290 in Houston, Texas.

In the past 4-5 months of operation, the MnPASS Express Lanes have only had one accident and six incidents. The team was unsure what the incidents included but they were likely stalled vehicles. The Minnesota State Patrol also took members of the Washington State Patrol, who also joined the team on the tour, out onto I-394 in order to answer questions about HOT lane enforcement, which proved to be very informative. Carol said that drivers were well behaved and were obeying the road striping that indicated where it was safe and legal to enter and exit the HOT lanes. Solo drivers without a transponder and who enter the HOT lanes where it is marked with a double white line could receive two tickets. One ticket would be issued for driving without paying the toll, and one ticket would be issued for entering the facility illegally.

Minnesota's motivation for implementing the MnPASS Express Lanes project was to manage traffic, which is also WSDOT's motivation for the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project.

Carol encouraged the partners to tour the MnPASS Express Lanes if they are in the Minneapolis area any time soon. There is a woman employed by the Minnesota DOT whose job it is to give tours of the facility, so the opportunity is there.

Discussion Topics:

- The partners asked if the team was able to observe the HOT Lanes operations during peak hours. Carol Hunter said that the group did observe the HOT Lanes facility during peak hours but it was a light day for congestion.
- Ann Martin, King County, asked how long the skip strip entry points were into the HOT lanes. The team believed that they were generally 1000 feet in length.
- Tim LaPorte, City of Kent, asked how long the MnPASS project was. Carol Hunter said that it was about 9 miles long, similar to the length of the future SR 167 HOT Lanes.
- The partners also asked how large the buffer was between the HOT lanes and the general-purpose lanes. The team believed that it was about a 2.5-foot buffer.
- Dennis Dowdy, City of Auburn, asked how most of the HOT lanes enforcement was done in Minneapolis and if cameras were used. Carol Hunter said that most

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of the enforcement is done by the state patrol. The beacon that flashes a light if it senses that a driver has a working transponder in their vehicle when they enter the HOT lanes is not used as frequently as anticipated. There is no photo enforcement because you cannot tell how many people are in the car with a photo. Jared Moore, Carter Burgess, said that it seemed that the word had really gotten out to the drivers about how to use the HOT lanes and the rules of use.

- Ann Martin, King County noted that in 2000, she observed the lack of enforcement for the HOV lanes in Minnesota. Carol said the patrol is being funded for enforcement and has much more of a presence as a result.
- Mike Sallis, WSDOT, asked if the entry areas are cued with the on and off ramps for I-394. Carol said no, not necessarily.
- Ann Martin asked if any of the funds being collected from the HOT Lanes were going back into improving the area's transit service. Carol said no, not yet. The facility has only been operating for about 4 months now, and the Minnesota DOT has not recovered enough of their costs to start reinvesting in transit. The DOT needs to clarify where their revenue from the HOT lanes will go. They are required to use the revenues for operations and maintenance and the project's capital cost, but there is nothing to guide the DOT on where to put their funds first. It is likely that once the Minnesota DOT services their debt, they will then look for ways to enhance the I-394, including transit improvements.
- Mike Sallis asked if Minnesota had a maximum toll. Carol said that on average, the toll was about \$1.50. In a few cases, the toll went as high as \$8.00, but that was for a short period and during very heavy congestion. Mark Bandy said that they were given a pricing chart by time of day, which would be helpful to show the group. The chart shows how the cost goes up and down during different hours of the day. Jared Moore noted that it was amazing how fast the system could calibrate the appropriate toll, based on congestion.
- Ann Martin asked if the HOT lanes were still experiencing satisfactory flows. Carol said yes.

HOT Lanes Project Schedule

Carol Hunter, WSDOT

The partners were given the most recent version of the HOT Lanes Pilot Project Folio, which summarizes the purpose and intent of the project. Inside the folio was a detailed project schedule. Carol noted that the project team has until about February or March to develop the project to 15% design, which will complete Phase 1. Phase 2 of the project will include developing the operations concept, and developing the design so WSDOT is ready to put the project out for bid in 2006.

WSDOT has federal dollars secured to get the HOT Lanes project through Phase 1 and Phase 2. The funding for construction is included in the 2005 Transportation Partnership Agreement (TPA), which is subject to a vote, due to Initiative-912, on this November's ballot.

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Discussion:

- Nick Afzali, City of Renton, asked if WSDOT would be pursuing any other sources of funding if the construction funding from the 2005 TPA is taken away. Carols said yes. This is a high priority project for WSDOT and the project cost of \$14 million is not a lot of money when discussing DOT projects.

SW 41st Interchange Design Concept

Nick Afzali, City of Renton

Nick Afzali distributed two handouts. The first handout included six different figures of alternative ways to connect SR 167 to I-405. Figure six, called the Renton – SR 167 Direct Connection Combination Alignment shows the preferred option, which has been approved by the Renton City Council. WSDOT is also in agreement with the preferred option. The City had to balance impacts to environmentally sensitive areas to the west and development that is growing on the east of I-405. Figure six of the handout shows what the City believes to be the best fit for the improvements, which accomplishes the goals of the project with the least amount of impacts.

The second handout included three images. The first image was of the current I-405/SR 167 Interchange. The second image was a computer rendering of the same interchange with some of the proposed improvements showing, to illustrate the concept that incremental improvements can be made. The third image was also a computer rendering of the ultimate vision for the I-405/SR 167 interchange. This image shows the master plan for the I-405 area near SR 167, which completely reconstructs the interchange by removing the existing loop ramps and building high-speed general-purpose and HOV ramps to connect the two state routes.

Discussion:

- Tim LaPorte asked if the City of Renton was no longer advocating an interchange at 27th. Nick Afzali said that was correct, even though the City has been advocating for that interchange for some time.
- The partners suggested that a graphic with the computer rendering of the ultimate vision as well as the funding source for each piece of that vision be developed. This would help as a communication tool to show what funding sources will be used and are necessary to complete the interchange project.

Public Involvement Activities

Carol Hunter, WSDOT

Carol mentioned that the project team is going to produce a video that simulates a driver's experience using HOT lanes on SR 167. The team will use footage from the corridor and add in engineering layers to simulate the HOT lanes facility. A media version, without narration, and a version for the public with narration will be produced. The video will be about 2-3 minutes long.

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Carol also offered to brief any interested commission, stakeholder group, or city council at the partner's request.

Carol passed out a CD that contained the SR 167 Corridor Plan and the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project display boards that were available at the open houses on October 4th in Auburn and October 13th in Renton. Carol reported that between the two open houses, about 100 members of the public came, some of which provided comments about both the SR 167 Corridor Plan and the HOT Lanes Pilot Project. Carol asked any partners who attended the open houses to share any comments that they heard with the group.

Discussion:

- Tim LaPorte asked if the video would be ready for the legislative session. Carol said that the team was not sure on the timeline for the video production but agreed that it would be helpful to have for the legislative session.
- Ann Martin said that she heard no negative comments regarding the HOT Lanes project. This shows progress, in terms of acceptance of the HOT lanes concept, and people are not as startled by the idea.
- Tim LaPorte asked if the team was still planning on having an open house in January 2006, and if so, the offer still stands to have the open house in the City of Kent. Carol said that the team was still planning on an open house in January 2006 and thanked Tim for his offer.
- Loren Sand, Perteet, said that there was a lot of support for extending the HOV system on SR 167 and he also heard some concerns from cyclists that want a way to cross (with an under or overpass) SR 167. Loren also said that interchanges came up a lot, in terms of truck movements and the inadequate length of on- and off-ramps, where trucks need room to speed up or slow down to enter or exit SR 167.
- Cathy Mooney, City of Kent, said that there is a very active cyclist group in the City of Kent who have been advocating for safe bike routes in this area for some time. Any projects that are recommended, as a part of the SR 167 Corridor Plan process should not create or increase any barriers to the biking system or make it more difficult for bikers to get around.
- Ann Martin asked if there was a potential for building some sort of facility that ties into the bike network that already exists in the valley, such as the interurban trail. She believes that it is not unreasonable to ask that the corridor project look at this as an aspect of the project. The project should assess whether the urban trail system or on-road facilities meet the needs of cyclists or if there are needs that still need to be met.

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SR 167 Corridor Plan Modeling Status

Loren Sand, Perteet

Loren explained the last few handouts given to the partners. The handouts included the map of funded projects on SR 167, the “brain scan” showing congestion and anticipated congestion in 2030 without improvements along SR 167, the four corridor options that are being evaluated, and the map of potential bottleneck projects or short-term improvements that are also being evaluated.

In regard to the modeling efforts, the team is currently working on completing the traffic operation simulation model. The travel demand model is also recently available from PSRC and WSDOT and the team is working through that. WSDOT also provided additional information on traffic counts and travel times, so the team is able to validate the base conditions of the model. Staff from Perteet will be contacting the partners shortly to ask for information about the local models to make sure that the transportation analysis zones are broken down into detail, especially around interchanges for modeling the bottleneck projects.

Discussion:

- Tim LaPorte noted that the SR 167 executive group was supposed to meet in September 2005, based on the original SR 167 Corridor Plan process and schedule diagram. Carol said that the executive group had not met yet and the timing of the meeting would be linked to what happens with the November ballot.
- Ann Martin asked what the purpose of the executive group meeting would be. Carol said it would be a briefing style meeting, in order to give the group an overview of what the project has accomplished so far and where it is going.
- Dick Dorsett, Port of Tacoma, said that the Port just completed a video on freight mobility and specifically why the average person in the region should care about freight mobility. The video is not an advocacy piece and is done in more of a documentary style. Karen Schmidt from the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board has been the lead on developing the video. If the partners would like a copy they can either contact Karen or Dick at the Port. Carol suggested that the project team could help field those requests. Partners who would like a copy of the video can email [Kristine dos Remedios at EnviroIssues, kdosremedios@enviroissues.com](mailto:kdosremedios@enviroissues.com), with their request, preferred mailing address, and desired video format. Kristine will then pass this request list on to Dick at the Port of Tacoma.

Next Meeting: 11/15/05, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.
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